

**Standard 7-5** The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and effects of world conflicts in the early twentieth century.

**7-5.2** Explain the outcome and effects of World War I, including the conditions and failures of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles and the effects of major treaties on population movement, the international economy, and shifts in borders. (H, P, G, E)

**Taxonomy Level:** B 2 Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

**Previous/future knowledge:**

In fifth grade, students summarized actions by the United States that contributed to the rise of this nation as a world power, including the annexation of new territory following the Spanish-American War and the role played by the United States in the building of the Panama Canal and in World War I (5-3.6).

In eighth grade, students will explain the impact of World War I on South Carolina (8-6.2).

In Global Studies, students will summarize the worldwide changes that took place following World War I (GS 5-1).

In US History, students will outline the causes and course of World War I, focusing on the involvement of the United States, including the effects of nationalism, ethnic and ideological conflicts, and Woodrow Wilson's leadership in the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations (USHC 6-4).

**It is essential for students to understand** the major effects of WWI relating to diplomatic solutions, geographic/political impact, and economic consequences. Students should recognize the Treaty of Versailles as the major treaty in regards to WWI and be able to describe the vital components of this Treaty. They should understand that President Wilson brought his proposals, known as the Fourteen Points, to the conference at Versailles to correct many of the problems that caused the Great War and to bring about a lasting world peace. Unfortunately, the positive proposals of Wilson and the punitive peace treaty that the Allies subsequently constructed were very different. In its final format the Treaty of Versailles (1919) was structured to punish Germany and included, among its foremost features, the "War Guilt Clause" in which Germany accepts responsibility for starting the war; German reparations; military restrictions such as limiting the army to 100,000 soldiers; no air force; demilitarization of the Rhineland; and German territorial losses (both internally such as Alsace-Lorraine and all overseas possessions). The other significant element of the Treaty dealt with the creation of the League of Nations. The League, the brainchild of President Woodrow Wilson, was an international organization designed to resolve disputes between nations and thereby avoid future wars. Unfortunately the structure and implementation of the Treaty and the League proved inadequate in solving the problems of the international community and, in fact, help contribute to the onset of WWII. Wilson wanted the basis of the Treaty to address various causes of the war such as self-determination and secret alliances, but the major European victors primarily wanted to weaken Germany and maintain, or enhance, their standing in the world. The latter view prevailed and, with the exception of the League of Nations, dominated the Treaty's provisions. This emphasis

on German retribution created a structural foundation which would contribute to economic and political instability in the years to come. Furthermore, Russia, among other nations negotiated different treaties and was denied a seat at the Versailles negotiations. This lack of input undermined the cohesiveness of the victors and contributed to the inability of the Treaty to provide stability and prevent future wars. Another example of the detrimental impact of the Treaty was the economic conditions created by the injurious reparations Germany was required to pay. These reparations, combined with Germany's loss of some of its prime industrial land and resources, made it virtually impossible for Germany to achieve economic stability. While this seemed to support British and French goals, German economic weakness actually hurt trade and production in Western Europe as well. In 1923, France further sabotaged Germany's ability to become economically viable by seizing the Ruhr (Germany's main industrial region). Germany's response was to start printing money that had no economic support, thereby causing hyperinflation and the devaluing of money across the continent.

While seen as the crowning achievement of the Treaty of Versailles by many, the League of Nations proved to be ineffectual in achieving its goal of world peace. At its core, the League was very weak and unstructured nor was it given the components necessary to bring about its lofty goal. For instance, not all major powers were members of the League. The United States chose not to join, while Germany and Russia were not allowed to join (Germany was finally allowed to join in 1926, but withdrew in 1933, while the Soviet Union finally joined in 1934). Japan and Italy, who were charter members, withdrew (in 1933 and 1937, respectively). The League had virtually no authority or influence with these nations thereby limiting its ability to influence international affairs. Another weakness involved the inability of the League to enforce its directives. Primarily the League had to rely upon moral persuasion – a tenuous tool at best. In theory the League could wage war, but would have to use volunteer troops from member nations, an act that was not going to occur readily. A third weakness of the League was that it required unanimous consent for decisions, an almost impossible directive in most situations. Because of these and other weaknesses, the League never became the international forum for solving disputes among nations that it was intended to become.

It is critical for students to recognize the changes in political boundaries in Europe following WWI. Nationalism, one of the causes leading to WWI, was an issue that needed to be addressed as nations emerged from the conflict. In his Fourteen Points, Wilson proposed self-determination as one of the critical components to be used in determining international borders. (This principle would be utilized selectively, however, as it would not be applied to the victorious Allied Powers). The other major principle was to weaken those countries of Central and Eastern Europe that fought with the Central Powers. It is important that students be able to use maps and understand the significant territorial changes in Europe as a result of WWI. The most significant changes included the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, German territorial losses (including all overseas colonies), the creation of Poland, and Russian territorial losses (initially due to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (the separate peace negotiated between Germany and Russia in 1917, though the Soviets did regain some of this territory after the war).

**It is not essential for students to know** Wilson's Fourteen Points or to know all the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, but they should be familiar with the general differences between the two. It is also not necessary for the students to be able to name all the new nations created after

WWI, but they should be able to cite and identify on a map the key pre/post war differences. Students are not required to know the formal organizational structure of the League of Nations, nor are students required to know the names of the various treaties associated with WWI.

**Assessment guidelines:**

The objective of this indicator is to **explain** the effects and outcomes of WWI, therefore the primary focus of assessment should be in constructing cause and effect models. Emphasis should be placed on the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, their connection to WWI and relationship with one another. It would be appropriate to have students **compare** the purposes and/or impact the key components of the Treaty. It would also be suitable for assessment to **summarize** these components. Appropriate assessments could call on students to **interpret** maps and/or **compare** political boundaries in Europe before and after WWI. It would be appropriate to have students **hypothesize** future conflicts or actions due to territorial changes after the war.